

Dale Farm: 'They promised a peaceful eviction. This wasn't peaceful'

Level 2 • Intermediate

1 Warmer

Would you like to live in a caravan? What would be the advantages / disadvantages?

2 Key words

Write the key words and expressions next to their meanings. The paragraph numbers are given to help you.

site

council

bailiffs

eviction

Travellers

1. _____ the process of forcing someone to leave the place where they are living (title)
2. _____ people who do not have permanent homes and who travel from one place to another (para 1)
3. _____ people whose job it is to take away someone's possessions or home because they cannot pay the money they owe (para 1)
4. _____ the elected officials who govern a local area (para 1)
5. _____ a place where you can stay in a tent or caravan (para 1)

judge

riot gear

negotiation

tasers

protesters

6. _____ people who publicly show that they disagree with something such as a law or policy (para 1)
7. _____ clothes and equipment used by the police in dangerous situations (para 2)
8. _____ weapons that produce a strong electric current (para 2)
9. _____ someone whose job is to make decisions in a court of law (para 3)
10. _____ formal talks in which people try to reach an agreement (para 6)

integrated

prejudices

sympathy

victory

portrayed

11. _____ a natural feeling of kindness and understanding that you have for someone who is experiencing something bad (para 7)
12. _____ shown or described in a particular way (para 8)
13. _____ accepted into a community (para 11)
14. _____ an occasion when someone wins (para 15)
15. _____ unreasonable opinions, especially not liking a particular group of people (para 15)

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Travellers describe how bailiffs and police arrived to evict them from Dale Farm

Alexandra Topping at Dale Farm
19 October, 2011

- 1 Basildon Council had spent more than ten years fighting to evict a group of Travellers from an illegal site. Knowing that bailiffs could arrive at any time, a small group of protesters locked themselves to the gates of Dale Farm and waited.
- 2 Police first entered the site at 7am. Almost 150 officers in full riot gear charged onto the site, using tasers against those that stood in their way. "They promised a peaceful eviction, but it wasn't," said Nora Sheridan, one of the residents. "It wasn't peaceful at all."
- 3 It has taken a long time to evict the Travellers. After ten years, the Travellers finally lost their fight when a high court judge ruled that the eviction from the unauthorized area of Dale Farm – part of the site is legal – should go ahead.
- 4 Traveller Mary Sheridan said, "The hardest bit now is going to be seeing the place that was my home being dug up. We have no address now; we are going to have to go on the road and we will be illegal."
- 5 Kathleen McCarthy, a spokeswoman for the Dale Farm Travellers, said Basildon Council had not given them any alternative sites in the area. "If they would just offer us a piece of land we would leave now," she said.
- 6 Speaking to reporters from around the world, Basildon Council Leader, Tony Ball, said he did not take any satisfaction from the eviction, but it was necessary. "I am absolutely clear that after ten years of negotiation to try and find a peaceful solution to this that actually what we are doing is the right thing," he said.
- 7 "I feel some sympathy for the women and children who have been misled by their own community who said that if they lived on the site they would be allowed to stay; this was never the case."
- 8 Travellers were angry at the way they had been portrayed throughout the long battle, Mary Sheridan, who has been on Dale Farm for ten years and has four children said. "People are saying that we have other places to go. But if I had anywhere else to go do you think I'd let my children live like this?"
- 9 "We don't want big houses, we don't want a flat; all we want is a little piece of land where we can park our caravans so we can educate our children and look after our elderly. Is that so hard?"
- 10 Among the Travellers there was a sense of helplessness. With her four-month-old son, Richard, on her knee, 29-year-old Margaret Sheridan said she had little hope left. "We're the main headline today, tomorrow we'll be the second," she said. "But soon we'll be forgotten."
- 11 She feared for the future of her son, and said: "Our children are never going to be integrated now. If we go on the road how can they get an education, how do you get a health appointment for your baby? Nobody in England should have to live like this."
- 12 Father Dan Mason, Priest at Our Lady of Good Counsel, criticized the way the eviction had been done. The police were not going to lead the operation – they were going to make sure that there was no violence on either side, he said. "Clearly that changed," he said.
- 13 He added: "I'm just so sad that this happened. There were other options – Basildon was offered sites from the Homes and Communities Agency, and it is tragic that they didn't accept them."
- 14 Candy Sheridan, Vice-Chair of the Gypsy Council, said that the eviction could cause big problems for the Traveller community. She

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tried to make sure sick residents had access to generators for nebulizers and insulin.

- 15 There was some hope too, though. "I feel we still had a victory," said Kathleen McCarthy. "If, through us being here, people have realized that we are human beings, and we have changed

some prejudices, then that is good. I think eventually Dale Farm will make things better for Travellers, even if we are out on the road."

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3 Comprehension check

Are these sentences true (T) or false (F) according to the article? Correct any that are false.

1. The Dale Farm eviction was not peaceful.
2. The police arrived at 7am, carrying guns.
3. The Travellers were moved to a new site.
4. The eviction came as a surprise.
5. Families with small children were allowed to stay in their homes.
6. The whole of the Dale Farm site had been illegally lived on by Travellers for the past ten years.
7. Bailiffs used Tasers on some protesters.
8. The eviction was criticized by a member of the Catholic Church.
9. Reporters from around the world were in Basildon to report on the eviction.
10. Generations of families lived on the site.

4 Further facts and information

Complete these sentences with information from the article.

1. The land at Dale Farm belongs to _____.
2. The _____ had been trying to evict the Travellers for over _____ years.
3. _____ locked themselves to the gates.
4. Margaret Sheridan is worried about her _____ future.
5. The eviction has made the former Dale Farm residents _____.
6. Kathleen McCarthy hopes the evictions will have helped to change people's _____.

5 Discussion

Do you think the eviction could have been more peaceful?

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6 Role-play

Imagine that it is three months before the eviction. You are at a meeting where it will be decided whether the eviction should go ahead. At this point, there is still a chance to find another solution.

Before beginning the meeting, use the information from the previous tasks to make notes on the role cards. Write about how each person at the meeting feels and what his/her opinions probably are. Look for quotes in the article to help you.

1. leader of the
local council

2. Traveller and member
of the Gypsy Council

3. local priest

4. resident of the area
next to the site

5. protester

6. local primary
school teacher

7 Webquest

Type *Dale Farm* into a search engine and find videos of the eviction.

Find out more about the Travellers (also known as *Pavee*): their origins, language and customs.

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KEY

2 Key words

1. eviction
2. Travellers
3. bailiffs
4. council
5. site
6. protesters
7. riot gear
8. tasers
9. judge
10. negotiation
11. sympathy
12. portrayed
13. integrated
14. victory
15. prejudices

3 Comprehension check

1. T
2. F (The police arrived at 7am, carrying tasers)
3. F (The Travellers were not given a new site to move to.)
4. F (The eviction was not a surprise because the legal battle had been going on for many years.)
5. F (Everyone was evicted.)
6. F (Part of the Dale Farm site is legal.)
7. F (The police used tasers on some protesters.)
8. T
9. T
10. T

4 Further facts and information

1. Basildon Council
2. council; ten
3. protesters
4. son's
5. homeless / angry / feel helpless
6. prejudices

6 Role-play

Teacher's notes: This task is for a minimum of three people. Roles 1 to 3 are essential for a balanced meeting. If there are more than six students in the group, more roles can be added as necessary, e.g. a sick Traveller, a member of a different travelling community, the person in charge of finances in the council, a representative of the police, the boss of the bailiffs company and someone to take the minutes.

Appoint a (neutral) Chair who should keep control, especially if the meeting gets heated. Try to get the students to reach a decision. Encourage them to use the language of meetings, and to think about the long-term consequences of their decision.

7 Webquest

In addition to Wikipedia and YouTube, useful sites include:

<http://paveepoint.ie/>
<http://www.irishtraveller.org.uk/>
<http://www.irishtraveller.org.uk/pavee/>
http://www.pyxies.com/irish_traveller/